

## CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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This report presents a volume of data derived from a variety of sources. As the 14 to 17 year old age group in Massachusetts is expected to increase 30 percent by the year 2005 (as compared to 1995 estimates), there is a need for increased attention to the ensuing impact on social service and public safety sectors of government. The identification of current juvenile crime patterns is crucial, as these trends are likely to continue as the juvenile population swells.

Critical information regarding juvenile offenders is provided by law enforcement to the FBI's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) and National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) data collection programs. The information provided in this report reflects a comprehensive analysis of these law enforcement data systems. For the first time, data regarding the characteristics and behavior of juvenile offenders is available for Massachusetts. While these data have been previously reported from a nationwide perspective, we now have Massachusetts' outlook on juvenile crime.

Through these systems we have determined that the overwhelming majority of crimes committed by juveniles are not crimes against persons, but property crimes. We have also uncovered that juvenile weapons offenses in Massachusetts are relatively low, with only 17 per 100,000 juveniles arrested for weapons possession. Furthermore, NIBRS data indicates that only two percent of incidents involving juveniles were committed with a firearm.

Certain data recovered in this inaugural analysis have implications for policymaking at the local and state levels of government. Specifically, we have confirmed national findings that juvenile crime in Massachusetts is at its peak during the after-school hours of 2PM and 6PM. While Massachusetts has been diligent in providing resources to local communities for juvenile programming during these critical hours, it is apparent that these programs must continue and additional, innovative strategies that provide positive alternatives to crime during the after school hours be explored.

Given the increased attention to crimes committed in our Nation's schools, an analysis of the location of juvenile crimes was warranted. Information provided by law enforcement through NIBRS indicates that approximately 13 percent of incidents involving juveniles in Massachusetts occurred on the grounds of a school or college. While this figure may appear to be low as compared to all incidents committed by juveniles, it should be taken very seriously given the sanctity of our schools as educational institutions. Any disruption in our community's schools is seen as a disruption to the education of the youth of our Commonwealth. The placement of police officers in our schools creates an environment that fosters safety, dispels fears of crime and violence, and increases police/youth relations. As such, law enforcement and school departments should continue to build relationships and implement programs that support police/youth relations and school safety.

There is also data supporting a call for law enforcement to begin to understand crime occurring outside of their jurisdictional boundaries. While police agencies are primarily interested in crimes occurring within their jurisdictional boundaries, criminal offenders are not confined to one particular community. In fact, one-quarter of juveniles arrested by law enforcement were

not residents of the community in which they committed their crime. There is a need for strong communication between police departments to identify juvenile offenders and their potential areas of operation. The spatial analysis of crime, through computerized mapping applications, allows law enforcement to identify hot spots of criminal activity that cross political boundaries. The Massachusetts State Police is currently implementing a web-based application, that will visually map crimes reported through NIBRS, allowing participating agencies the means for identifying the nature and volume of crimes committed in and around their community. Multijurisdictional projects, such as the one being pioneered by the Massachusetts State Police, are encouraged to help identify and eradicate crime patterns occurring across communities.

It is important to note that the information presented in this report results primarily from the investigative work of the law enforcement community. It is only through the continued dedication of police towards understanding the crimes and criminals of the Commonwealth that these data are available. Currently, NIBRS data represents approximately one-third of the state's population. Increased participation by law enforcement in the UCR and NIBRS programs, will afford us much greater knowledge of the crimes occurring in the Commonwealth. While the aggregated data reported to UCR provides the overall number of crime incidents and arrests, it does not allow for any comprehensive analysis of the characteristics of these crimes or the offenders and victims involved. That stated, the Massachusetts research community needs to continue to demonstrate the value of these data to law enforcement and the public, and state policymakers should continue to encourage law enforcement participation in UCR and, more specifically, NIBRS.

The information highlighted above represent only a few of the findings of the analysis presented in this report. Law enforcement representatives and policymakers are encouraged to review the report in its entirety to become informed of the status of juvenile crime in the Commonwealth.